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SUBJECT: GRV RECALLS AMBASSADOR FROM PERU AND WELCOMES
PALSTINIAN MISSION

REF: LIMA 00602

Classified B: A/Political Counselor Daniel Lawton,
Reasons 14 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) ordered its ambassador home from Peru on April 27 to protest the Peruvian government's decision to grant opposition leader Manuel Rosales asylum. On the same day, Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro welcomed a senior Palestinian Authority official to Caracas to open a new Palestinian Authority mission. Venezuela severed diplomatic ties with Israel earlier this year, and President Chavez continues to position himself as a champion of the Palestinians. End Summary.

GBRV Ire Toward Peru

12. (SBU) The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (GBRV) issued a terse April 27 communique calling Peru's granting of asylum to Venezuelan opposition leader Manuel Rosales earlier that day "a mockery of international law." The Foreign Ministry press announcement complained that Peru had made the decision before the Interpol office in Lima had received all the necessary documentation and thus undermined the fight against corruption. The GBRV also announced the recall its ambassador to Peru in protest and to conduct a full review of relations with Peru. The GBRV is also postponing the transfer of a new ambassador to Peru. Peru previously granted asylum to opposition union leader Carlos Ortega and former opposition governor of Yaracuy State Eduardo Lapi in 2006 and 2007, respectively.

13. (C) In Caracas, Peruvian Embassy First Secretary Altamirano (protect throughout) told Poloff that Peru intends to maintain cordial relations while awaiting instructions from Lima, noting that both President Garcia and Foreign Minister Garcia Belaunde were attending a business forum in Brazil. Altamirano also shared that the current Peruvian Chief of Mission in Caracas, a non-career ambassador, is scheduled to transfer out of Venezuela in June.

New Palestinian Embassy in Caracas

14. (SBU) Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro presided over the opening of the Palestinian embassy in Venezuela on April 27. Maduro called the embassy a "ratification of President Hugo Chavez's solidarity" with the Palestinian people's struggle for "life, territory and liberty." The Palestinian Authority's foreign policy chief

Riad Al-Malki, on hand for the opening, called the GBRV's decision "a giant step filled with courage," and thanked the GBRV's support for "opening and maintaining" the new embassy. Al-Malki added that the mission would have a mandate to reach out to Palestinians from Mexico to Argentina.

Comment

¶5. (C) President Chavez "froze" relations with Spain and Colombia over perceived slights in 2007, therefore the GBRV decision to recall its ambassador from Lima is a relatively mild response from the generally volatile Chavez government. This may be due to the fact that Rosales' departure effectively diminishes his political importance in Venezuela and saves the GBRV from having to conduct a potentially embarrassing show trial. Venezuela's relations with the economically vibrant Peru, quickly becoming a repository of Venezuelan dissidents, is unlikely to suffer sustained damage.

¶6. (C) Allowing the Palestinian Authority to open a foreign mission, and quite possibly financing it, solidifies Chavez's efforts to cast himself as a champion of the Palestinians. He severed ties with Israel in the wake of Israel's intervention in Gaza earlier this year, and he vocally opposed Israel's military incursion into Lebanon in 2006.

CAULFIELD